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VANES AND WEATHERCOCKS

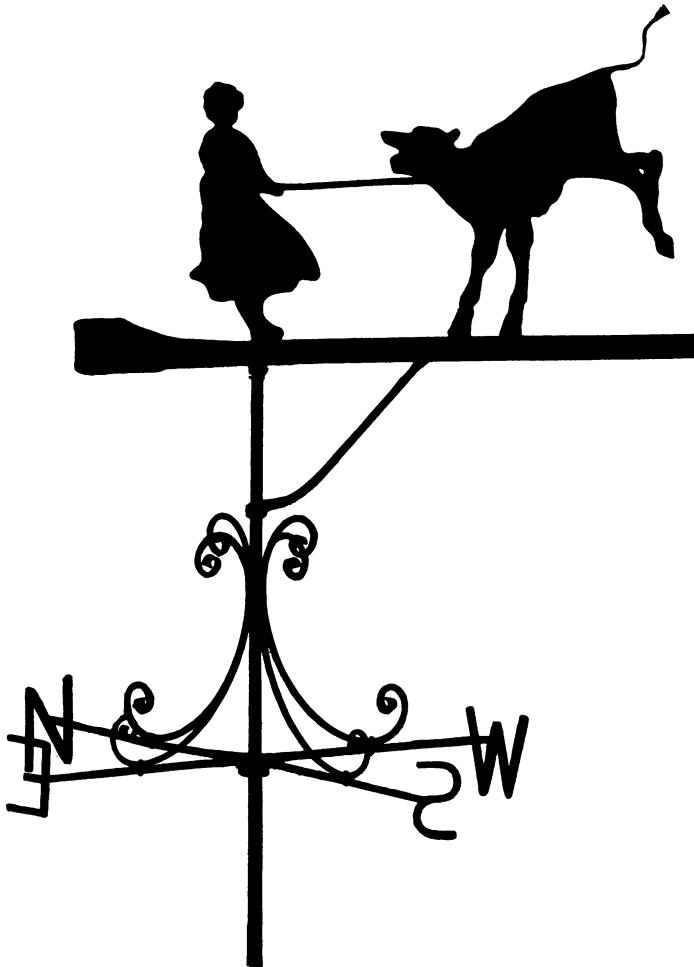
Shrouded in mystery as is the origin of the weathervane, we are led to believe that every nation and every era has had some such device for determining the direction of the wind. The vane is the simplest, as well as the earliest, of all meteorological instruments, yet, with all the wealth of modern invention, one still depends upon this aerial sign to tell what may be expected of the wind and weather.



WEATHERCOCK OF THE XV CENTURY
From an old Church in Ghent

It is probable that the vane was first used upon ships, taking the form of a small flag, or banner, pennon-shaped. Gradually it came to bear distinguishing marks. Thus the Greek seamen would place upon a spear or pole a colored bit of cloth or ribbon, for the double purpose of designating their particular ship and telling whence the wind blew. The Bayeux Tapestry, that famous record of a bygone age, shows, floating from the mast heads of several ships, these little pennon-shaped banners, which doubtless were used for the same purpose as the present-day dog-vane.

When the vane was introduced upon the land, it was made of metal, as being more durable, and the artistic spirit of the metal-worker was soon adorning it with infinite evidences of his skill. The first recorded land vane, of which any description has come down to us, was built at Athens as early as



WEATHER VANE

Designed by Carl A. Dubs, and Executed by Samuel Yellin
Pupils of the School

100 B. C., and was called the Temple of the Eight Winds. It was an octagonal marble tower, having on every side a figure representing the quarter from which the wind blew, carved after a model by Andronicus Cyrrhestes. On the top of this tower was placed a little spire, and on the spire a bronze Triton,

which, by veering around, told the direction of the wind. From Roman times we have Varro's description of some such building upon his farm, and the remains of a like wind-indicator have been found near the Via Appia.

There are numerous theories regarding the almost universal use of the cock in the capacity of vane, but it seems difficult to decide upon any one of them as being authentic. It is a fact, however, that very early the cock came to be so generally used that the name "weathercock" has quite overshadowed the original "vane." This change was an established fact in 1515. In the sixth century Pope Gregory declared the cock the emblem of Christianity, and another Papal enactment in the ninth century ordered the figure of the cock to be placed upon every church steeple as the emblem of Saint Peter. Such strong Papal sanction is doubtless one cause of the raising of the homely barnyard fowl to his present lofty position.

Our first illustration shows an old weathercock of the fourteenth or fifteenth century, exhibited in the North Corridor. It is a very crude example of Flemish workmanship, of early Gothic style, and once adorned an old church in Ghent. It is made of riveted sheets of hammered copper and was presented to the Museum by Mrs. John Harrison.

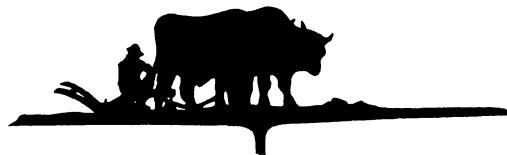
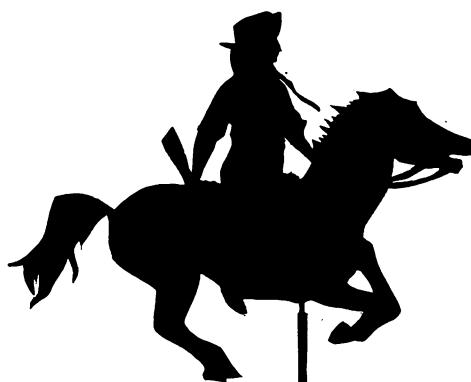
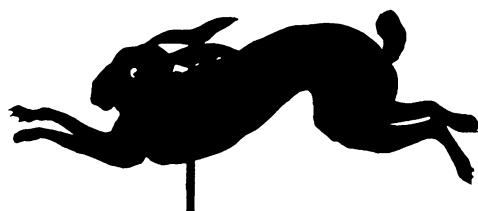
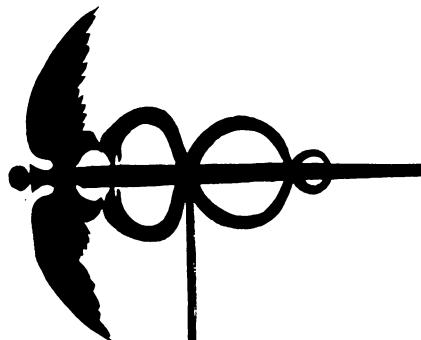
The favorite vane of the Middle Ages—a design which is being revived to some extent at present—was in the form of a beast or bird sitting on a slender pedestal and carrying an upright rod on which a bit of metal was hung like a flag, ornamented in various ways. These flags were often decorated with the owners' arms, and so were called *panonceaux*. In the fifteenth century the Tower of London had a banner-vane, pierced with the arms of England and France quarterly.

In early times in France, the erection of vanes was a privilege accorded to the few. It was originally granted only to those who had been first to mount and to display their banner upon an enemy's rampart. Thus the vane came to be a mark of rank and nobility, this custom prevailing in France as late as two hundred years ago.

From early prints we have evidence that weathercocks were used in England in Anglo-Saxon days. A tenth century print of Saint Swithin's Church at Winchester shows distinctly two cocks upon the turrets. But very early the individuality of the owner asserted itself, and vanes of all descriptions began to ornament the buildings. Chaucer speaks of musical vanes in his "Dreams," and many old vanes are still to be found, dating from early times. One, representing a serpent and dove, is even now pointing to the wind from an old building at Cambridge.

Following the idea of individuality, the vanes of to-day show an infinite variety of designs. Churches often have vanes picturing some story or legend of their patron saints; a seacoast town shows its ships, whales, or fish, and the little country village still clings to the gallant cock or other friendly animal.

The accompanying illustrations show some vanes designed and executed by various students of the Department of Applied Art of our schools. Here the imagination of the artist has had full sway, and the results are most interesting.



WEATHER VANES
Designed and Executed by Pupils of the School

The vane with the girl and calf motif was made for Mr. H. H. Battles, being awarded the prize of \$25 offered by him for an original design.

In the group of seven, the range of subjects is varied and charming. Here, with its coiled serpents, is Mercury's wand, a fitting messenger of the upper airs. The farm is greatly in evidence, and we have the waggoner with his team, the yoke of oxen plowing, and, in a new form, the cock, himself blown about by the winds which he reports, and suffering the added indignity of being pursued by an unkind fate. The rabbit and fish are ready to faithfully tell the news of their unaccustomed atmosphere, and the cowboy is having the wildest ride of his life.

Thus does the artist avail himself of what idea he will, as "a feather for every wind that blows," and creates the little sign upon the housetop not only for our edification, but for our delight.

MARY H. SHAFFNER.



NOTES

NEW COVER DESIGN—The outside cover design for this number of the BULLETIN was drawn by F. Brunner, a pupil of the School connected with this Museum.

NEW BENCHES—Substantial new oak settees have been placed in the Rotunda and East Corridor for the use of visitors.

LOAN COLLECTIONS—The collection of Japanese swords, menukis, and sword guards, formed by Edmund G. Hamersly, Esq., has been installed in the North Corridor.

NEW CASES—Two new wall cases have been erected at the eastern end of the North Corridor for the accommodation of the European metal work. All of the collections of brass, copper and iron objects are now gathered together here. The silver, plate and jewelry will remain in the East Gallery.

GENERAL GUIDE—The illustrated General Museum Guide, which for some time has been in course of preparation, is now in press and will be on sale in January. Copies will be furnished to members, free of charge, on application to the Librarian of the Museum.

The price to others will be 25 cents.

CHARTS OF THE BUILDING—A framed ground plan of the building has been placed at the entrance to each apartment, on which the location of the room is indicated in red color. By reference to these charts, in connection with the General Guide, visitors will hereafter be able to find, without difficulty, any particular collection of objects in the building.